

# Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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## Singing Idols

Get to know the 12 finalists in this year's Tan Holdings' Quest for Singing Idol of the CNMI as they vie for the ultimate title on May 19 at the Saipan Grand Hotel's Club V.

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## Rivermaya Wins

Rivermaya made history at the 2006 MTV Asia Awards in Bangkok, becoming the first Filipino rock group to play in the award show's history.

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# 500-plus Filipinos are freed from Saudi jails

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo returned to Manila from a state visit to Saudi Arabia on Thursday after winning the release of more than 500 Filipino prisoners, plus an assurance of a stable supply of oil from the Arab kingdom.

"Saudi Arabia is a strategic ally of the Philippines not only because it hosts more than a million Filipino workers, but also because it is our leading supplier of oil and a leading supporter of

our peace process in Mindanao," she said in a statement.

Mindanao is the traditional Filipino Muslim homeland where the government is trying to settle a decades-long separatist rebellion.

Arroyo said Saudi monarch King Abdullah ordered the release of more than 500 jailed Filipinos during her state visit. She said about 200 others were released in February in anticipation of her trip.

**500-PLUS Page 4**

An overseas Filipino worker, left, is comforted by an unidentified relative shortly after being welcomed by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, unseen, Thursday, May 11, 2006 in Manila.



## Landslides, floods isolate villages in Leyte, Samar

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Landslides and floods triggered by an approaching storm Thursday isolated at least 12 villages in the central Philippines but there were no reports of casualties, officials said.

The storm also forced the coast guard to stop ferry services between the southeastern tip of the main island of Luzon and Samar island, stranding

nearly 3,000 passengers and dozens of vehicles, said Neri Amparo, operations chief of the Office of Civil Defense.

Southern Leyte provincial Gov. Rosette Lerias said landslides blocked access to six villages.

Lerias said a swollen river threatened at least six other villages and she appealed over the radio for residents

**LANDSLIDES Page 4**

## NCLEX market for NMI seen to rise



Ongoing marketing efforts continue in the Philippines as the Marianas Visitors Authority held its second seminar in that country this year.

The CNMI Product Update Seminar, held at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Manila on April 28, 2006, boasted more interest from nursing recruit-

ers. A mixture of interested travel agents and recruiters attended the seminar in efforts to reinvigorate the NCLEX and leisure travel market to the CNMI.

The seminar was held to provide the attendees updated information about the destination.

MVA's Wayne Pangelinan presented various appeals and attributes

**NCLEX Page 4**



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# PINOYNEWS

# Tan Holdings' Quest for Singing Idol

## □ Vote for Mr. Popularity

Cast your vote for the most popular Singing Idol contestant in this year's Tan Holdings' Quest for Singing Idol of the CNMI. Get to know the 12 finalist as they vie for the ultimate title on May 19 at the Saipan Grand Hotel's Club V. *All pictures are by Oscar Yema.*

### Marco "Maco" Agupa

**Birthday:** July 3, 1979

**Company:** Shirley's Coffee Shop

**Position:** Dining Supervisor

**Length of Service:** 4 1/2 months

**Someone you admire:** Jesus Christ, my best friend. Someone who is always there to give me guidance.

**Memorable experience:** When I got my first paycheck for only... (smiles)

**Inspiration:** My queen of all queens. My hero of all heroes. My "bagoong" on my green mangoes. And my "puto" on my "dinuguan." My "nanay."



### Jersh C. Angeles

**Birthday:** June 2, 1978

**Company:** Shirley's Coffee Shop

**Position:** Assistant Supervisor

**Length of Service:** 6 months

**Someone you admire:** I admire so much my father. He's the most understanding person I've ever known.

**Memorable experience:** I got to watch James Ingram and Patti Austin live.

**Inspiration:** Gen, my fiancée.



### Ricardo Bustillos

**Birthday:** April 19, 1976

**Company:** Saipan Grand Hotel

**Position:** F&B staff

**Length of Service:** 5 years

**Someone you admire:** I admire my mom the most.

**Memorable experience:** Joining the Singing Idol contest

**Inspiration:** SGH F&B Dept. and the hotel management.



### Marconi Calindas

**Birthday:** July 14, 1975

**Company:** Saipan Tribune

**Position:** Reporter

**Length of Service:** 1 year and 5 months

**Someone you admire:** Vincent van Gogh, Oprah Winfrey

**Memorable experience:** Having a chitchat with concert king Martin Nievera on Saipan.

**Inspiration:** My mom for her resilience and courage.



### Romy de Jesus

**Birthday:** May 16

**Company:** CGMC, IT Department

**Position:** Technical Support Assistant

**Length of Service:** 5 years

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**Hydrick Magdalita****Birthday:** Aug. 2, 1977**Company:** Shirley's Coffee Shop**Position:** Wait staff**Length of Service:** 1 year 6 months**Irwin Jamisola****Birthday:** Sept. 3, 1968**Company:** Century Hotel**Position:** Accountant**Length of Service:** 5 years**Someone you admire:** I admire Eli Arago. He proves that indigence is not a hindrance to success.**Memorable experience:** When I first spoke in a congregation of student leaders**Inspiration:** I'm inspired by my own interests as I really love music.**Eleno P. Munoz****Birthday:** March 20, 1961**Company:** Saipan Grand Hotel**Position:** Cook**Length of Service:** 1 year**Someone you admire:** My wife because she is my inspiration in my life.**Memorable experience:** When I had a stint of cooking at ABS-CBN in Manila in 1988 with Cabalen.**Inspiration:** My wife and kids, even though they are not here with me.**Celedonio "Donnie" Canlas****Birthday:** March 3, 1972**Company:** Saipan Grand Hotel**Position:** Commercial cleaner**Length of Service:** 6 months**Someone you admire:** My family**Memorable experience:** When I joined the Taste of the Marianas Competition Apprentice Category.**Inspiration:** My newborn baby.**Jener "Jhey" A. Pineda****Birthday:** March 23, 1978**Company:** Shirley's Coffee Shop**Position:** Wait staff**Length of Service:** 4 months**Someone you admire:** God, for giving me the talent to sing and the chance to share it to all.**Memorable experience:** Joining the Quest for Singing Idol tops it all because it's a first for me.**Inspiration:** God for the source of my strength and for making all this possible, my family especially my parents, my greatest fan, frannie for love, support and courage.**Brad E. Ruzsala****Birthday:** Nov. 9**Company:** Saipan Tribune**Position:** Sportswriter**Length of Service:** over 2 years**Someone you admire:** Everyone in the Tan Holdings Idol because just about everyone sings at home, in the car, and at work but only these folks were brave enough to do it in public.**Memorable experience:** When my editor Jayvee Vallejera told me that I am the best reporter that he has seen in his 35 years working in the newspaper. *Editor's Note: Riiiiiiiiiiight.***Inspiration:** My parents because they were able to raise three kids through the good times and the not-so-good times and for giving me the confidence to try anything – like the Tan Holdings Idol.**Freddie Velasquez****Birthday:** April 24, 1972**Company:** Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan**Position:** Cook**Length of Service:** 3 years**Someone you admire:** My cousin Regine Velasquez because she's my idol beside she's a family member.**Memorable experience:** This competition because it's my first and it's a lot of pressure.**Inspiration:** My family of course.**VOTE FOR MR. POPULARITY**

Cast your vote for the most popular Singing Idol finalist in this year's Tan Holdings' Quest for Singing Idol of the CNMI. Fill up this coupon, clip and drop it at the drop box that will be provided during the grand finals on May 19 at the Saipan Grand Hotel's Club V. Only original prints of the coupon will be counted; photocopies will be disqualified. This coupon will be printed daily in the Classified Ads section of the *Saipan Tribune* until May 19, Friday. The Singing Idol who garners the most number of votes will be declared Mr. Popularity during the grand finals. The finalists are Marco Agupa, Jersh C. Angeles, Ricardo Bustillos, Marconi Calindas, Romy de Jesus, Celedonio "Donnie" Canlas, Irwin Jamisola, Eleno P. Munoz, Hydrick Magdalita, Jener A. Pineda, Brad E. Ruzsala, and Freddie Velasquez.

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# OFW Support Group holds 2nd rummage sale

By **MARCONI CALINDAS**  
REPORTER

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration-OFW Support Group will hold for the second time a “Huge Rummage for a Cause” and tent sale the whole day tomorrow, Sunday.

The group said it aims to assist all Filipino workers—not only those who are still in the CNMI but also those who have already returned home—through this fundraising activity.

Planning Committee officer Dang

Bernabe invites everyone on Saipan to participate in this cause-oriented activity.

Bernabe said the event would be held from 9am to 6pm tomorrow at the Minachom Atdao in Susupe in front of the Gilbert C. Ada Gym.

Donations for the sale are very much welcome, said Bernabe. “All they have to do is bring the items to the venue and look for the OFW Support Group booth.”

For those who want to participate and sell new or used clothes, a \$5 entry

fee will be charged.

The OFW-Support Group will forward the proceeds of the one-day sale to OWWA’s Tuloy-Aral Project, through which the support group is sponsoring the education of children of former OFWs.

At least 68 CNMI individuals and groups have come forward to participate in this year’s edition of the OWWA Tuloy-Aral Project.

Last school year, the Tuloy Aral Project in the CNMI ranked No. 1 among OWWA offices in the

world after it managed to recruit 31 foster parents.

The Tuloy Aral Project is an OWWA project not only in the CNMI but also in other parts of the world where there are OWWA offices. It aims to help children of former over-

seas Filipino workers and other needy children in the Philippines fulfill their dreams of continuing their education. With the money, the children will be provided school necessities such as notebooks, pens, pads, bags, and books, among others.

## Japan agrees to the non-quota deployment of nurses—RP exec

By **VERONICA UY**  
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Discussions on the labor component of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) finally moved forward after Japan agreed to a non-quota deployment of Filipino nurses and caregivers, a labor official said.

“We have some form of common understanding that the agreement would be non-quota-based. We have accepted some restrictions,” Labor Undersecretary Danilo Cruz told reporters at the conference of labor ministries of Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Asia.

Cruz, who is labor undersecretary for employment promotion and man-

power development, said the number of Filipino nurses and caregivers that may be sent to work in Japan would depend on the capacity of Japan’s training institutions to accommodate their six-month training in the Nihonggo language and in Japan’s nursing and care-giving practices.

“We have agreed to have the training process done in Japan. We have also agreed that any deployment would comply with existing [Japanese] immigration rules,” he said.

Although he refused to indicate a date when the agreement would be ready for signing, Cruz said there “just some legal issues that need to be finalized. Some wordings.”

“It’s OK that there are no numbers because we insisted on that.

[Japan’s agreement to train Filipino health workers] means that they accept the responsibility of training them,” Cruz said.

Nurses’ organizations in Japan have been lobbying against the hiring of foreign nurses despite Japan’s increasing need for them due to its ageing population.

In December 2002, Japan and the Philippines have agreed to sign a bilateral free trade agreement—the JPEPA—that will also cover the hiring of Filipino health workers in Japan.

This part of the negotiations had been snagged by Japan’s insistence to put a quota on the number of health workers to be hired. The Philippine negotiating team, led by Cruz, wanted a market-dictated number.

## RP rates poorly in competitiveness survey

The Philippines ranked 49th among the 61 countries rated in a survey on global competitiveness in 2005, maintaining the poor position it had in 2004.

The country rated weakly in the areas of education, good governance, investment climate, and health, according to the 2006 World Competitiveness Yearbook published by the Switzerland-based Institute for Management Development (IMD).

The results of the World Competitiveness Survey were presented Thursday at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) in Makati City.

“Our assessment is that [the country’s] problems have been recurring year in and year out,” said Mia Denopol, project manager for the Global Competitiveness program.

Denopol noted that the areas in which the country rated poorly had not changed.

She cited the problem of poor infrastructure that placed the country outside the radar screen of foreign investors.

In pupil-teacher ratio, the Philippines ranked lowest at 61, said Dennis Legaspi, associate director of the AIM Policy Center, IMD’s partner in disseminating the World Competitiveness Survey.

Other areas in which the Philippines ranked low were expenditure on education (60th), expenditure on health (60th), expenditure on research and development (60th), country’s credit rating (57th), country image abroad (57th), risk of political instability (60th), bribery and corruption (60th), brain drain (58th), and independence of public service from political interference (59th).

The report also cited the improved ranking of other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Legaspi said China moved up from 31st place in 2004 to 19th last year, while India rose from 39th place to 29th. Malaysia moved from 28th to 23rd.

Hong Kong and Singapore ranked second and third after the United States, which was number one.

There were areas in which the Philippines ranked strongly, Legaspi said, such in cost of living, in which it ranked the first.

The Philippines also got the highest rank in percentage of high-technology exports as a percentage of manufactured goods.

The country performed strongly in real short-term interest rate (ranking second), consumption tax rate (sixth), collected tax revenues as percentage of the gross domestic product (seventh), compensation levels (fourth), working hours (fifth). **INQ7.net**

making them the nation’s biggest export “commodity,” according to economists. In addition to providing jobs for about 1 million Filipinos, Saudi Arabia also supplies 40 percent of the Philippines’ oil needs.

The activist group Migrante, whose members include relatives of Filipino overseas workers, said Arroyo had not mentioned hundreds more left behind in jails in Saudi Arabia and other Middle East countries or sexual abuses suffered by Filipino women workers there.

“Given that more substantial changes or policies regarding the exploitative working conditions, sexual harassment, rape, contract substitution and the wages of Filipino migrants were not addressed, the sad reality may be that in a few weeks or months, Saudi Arabia’s prisons may

again be unjustly filled up with even more overseas Filipino workers,” the group said in a statement.

Arroyo said she was “harnessing strategic diplomacy to protect the national interest” and trying to gain more investments to spur domestic and overseas jobs for Filipinos.

She said Saudi Aramco, the government’s partner in Philippine oil refiner Petron Corp., will study the feasibility of building an oil refinery in the southern Mindanao region, and will proceed with a US\$300 million (€235 million) investment in a petrochemical plant in Bataan province west of Manila.

Arroyo also said Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Al Saud would send a team to look into possible investments in tourism in the Philippines.

### LABOR FRONT

## Employer in default

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
REPORTER

**Q: What should a prevailing guest worker do if his or her employer fails to pay within 30 days as directed pursuant to a Labor administrative order or settlement agreement?**

**A:** Labor hearing office’s administrative orders, including settlement agreements, should include a payment schedule for all awards, if any, to the prevailing party.

In the event that a prevailing worker does not receive any payment within 30 days of the due date set forth in the administrative order or settlement agreement, the worker may file a motion with Labor’s administrative hearing office. The worker’s motion should request the hearing officer to issue an order to show cause. The hearing officer may then issue an order directing the defaulting party to appear and explain why payment has not been made. Unless good cause is shown, the hearing officer may sanction the defaulting party by an amount equal to the amount of any outstanding payment.

**Q: What will happen if the defaulting employer fails to make any payment within 90 days?**

**A:** According to Alien Labor Rules and Regulations, if no payment is made within 90 days, the Labor administrative hearing office shall immediately refer the matter to the office of the Labor Secretary for initiation of a collection action.

**Q: Can a Labor mediator drop an alien worker’s complaint?**

**A:** Yes. The mediator may dismiss a worker’s complaint during mediation proceedings if the alleged violation is barred by a statute of limitations or any other valid lawful reason.

Submit questions on labor issues to *Saipan Tribune* via e-mail at [editor@saipantribune.com](mailto:editor@saipantribune.com), or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 135. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the *Saipan Tribune’s* office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.

### LANDSLIDES

FROM PAGE 1

living on the riverside to evacuate. She estimated about 6,000 people were affected by landslides and floods in the 12 villages.

In February, a mountainside collapsed in Saint Bernard town, in Southern Leyte, burying the entire village of Guinsaugon and killing more than 1,000 people.

The weather bureau reported that tropical storm Chanchu was moving

northwestward toward Samar at 19 kilometers (12 miles) per hour, packing winds of 110 kph (69 mph) and gusts of up to 140 kph (88 mph).

Leyte, a mountainous island southeast of Manila, lies on unstable ground straddling the Philippine Fault, one of the major earthquake generators that zigzags from the north to the south of the country. In 2003, government geologists listed more than 80 percent of the island as prone to hazards such as landslides.

### NCLEX

FROM PAGE 1

of the CNMI as a destination of choice. Also, he highlighted the CNMI as a popular NCLEX testing site.

Pangelinan also focused on the current three flights per week that Continental Airlines provides between Manila and Saipan. He also discussed Visitor Entry Permit issues.

Century Hotel GM Lynn Knight presented the hotel as an ideal property for the NCLEX market, while mentioning Saipan Grand Hotel and Fiesta Resort & Spa offering higher-end products for their clients. She also mentioned the themes the hotels portray to visitors, as it would make the properties more enjoyable.

Knight, who is also the chairwoman of the Hotel Association of the NMI, also spoke on behalf of the association, discussing the renovation of properties and improvements that have been made among its member hotels to

provide better quality services and accommodations.

“The MVA held this second seminar to provide an update of the request made at the last seminar that was jointly sponsored by Continental Airlines, GVB and the MVA,” said Pangelinan. “The travel agents and recruiters asked to find a solution to simplifying the communication lines between Immigration and themselves.”

Toward the close of the seminar, the travel agents and nursing recruiters had an opportunity to win valuable prizes through a lucky draw format.

Continental Airlines offered two tickets for this event, while Century Hotel, Aqua Resort Club, and the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino provided gift certificates and other prizes, while PIC Saipan provided giveaways.

“We are grateful for their contribution to our product update seminar and we hope that more properties on island will look at this market as an opportunity to diversify,” said Pangelinan.

### 500-PLUS

FROM PAGE 1

“The king told me how he cherishes our workers,” she said.

The first group of former prisoners, who were to start arriving in Manila later Thursday, include 10 who were charged with homicide for whom the king paid blood money to families of their alleged victims, she said.

“The message to our people is that you can rely upon your government to intensify cooperation with Saudi Arabia to always take care of the welfare of our workers there,” she said.

The Philippines is largely dependent on millions of Filipino workers overseas, whose remittances are the country’s largest source of foreign earnings,



# A chance to meet the Philippine president

By **MARCONI CALINDAS**  
REPORTER

The Philippine Consulate General in the CNMI is inviting all Filipino-Americans and interested individuals in the Commonwealth for the chance to reconnect with their roots and meet the Philippine president through the "Ambassadors and Consuls General Tour 2006."

Consul General Wilfredo Maximo earlier said that his office has partnered with Century Travel Agency, Inc. to come up with this tour of the Philippines to give Filipino-Americans and others a chance to see several

spots of interest in Manila. The trip is slated from July 13 to 22.

Maximo said the tour is actually intended for Filipinos born and raised in the CNMI or the United States. The highlight of this program is a chance to meet Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the Malacañang Palace in Manila.

"This is also open to those who want to have a vacation in Manila," said Maximo.

The tour will only cost \$360 per person for a twin-sharing room hotel accommodation. The price includes the three-night hotel stay, a Metro Manila City tour, breakfast and other

activities that would surely provide memorable moments, according to Century Travel Agency Inc.

The \$360 fee does not include the roundtrip airfare, taxes, airport terminal fee, gratuities or tips for the tour guide or driver for the tour.

Deadline for registration is on May 15. A nonrefundable deposit of \$100 per person, payable to Century Travel Agency Inc., is due upon registration.

The itinerary for the guests will include VIP lei reception and as-

sistance at both Immigration and Customs counters at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. An aircon tourist bus with guide will bring participants to Makati to check-in at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel and the New World Renaissance Hotel.

The tourists will also have an option to join a tour of the Makati Central Business District and The Fort. "Tiangge" and an Expo will also run throughout the duration of the Basic Tour that includes: shops for Philippine attire, handicraft, and exquisite

jewelry and chitchat with experts on "Pasarap, Paganda, Pasaya, at Pangkabuhayan packages" [health and wellness, medical tourism, and entrepreneurship].

They will also have an exciting and unique tour of Intramuros with Lights and Sound Museum Tour, Fort Santiago, "Bahay Tsinoi", National Museum of the People, the Gold Exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum, the American Cemetery, and the "Libingan Ng Mga Bayani."

The visitors will also proceed to Rizal Park for a wreath-laying ceremony and a visit to the Malacañang Palace and its museum.

A tour at the Cultural Center

of the Philippines and the Mall of Asia and a visit to the "Gawad Kalinga" Village to help rebuild a community will be the last stop for the tourist.

For more information, contact the Philippine Consulate Office at the 5th Floor, Nauru Building in Susupe at 234-1848 or 234-1850 or through fax at 234-1849 or e-mail the office at saipanpcg@pticom.com.

You may also contact Century Travel Agency Inc. at the ground floor of the CIC Centre along Beach Road, Garapan, at 235-3708 or fax 235-3711 or e-mail the office at arlene\_almero@centurytravelagency.com.



Arroyo

## Blast, fire hit RP oil tanker

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**—An explosion rocked an oil tanker undergoing repairs west of the Philippine capital of Manila, triggering a fire that injured two workers before it was contained, officials said Thursday.

Coast Guard chief Vice Adm. Arthur Gosangan said welding work was being done on one of M/T Daniella Natividad's tanks when the work apparently triggered an explosion and fire that left the two workers seriously burned.

Gosangan ruled out a terrorist attack, but said the incident was under investigation.

"They already contained the fire," he said by telephone. There was no report of any oil spill or threat of the vessel sinking, he said.

A coast guard statement said the fire was fully extinguished three and a half hours after it broke out early Thursday.

Gosangan said the coast guard sent a tugboat to help put out the fire on the tanker, docked in Limay town, 50 kilometers (30 miles) west of Manila.

His office corrected its earlier report that the injured men were part of the crew, saying they were contractual workers.

Arnie Santiago, an officer from the government's Maritime Industry Authority, said they suffered second- and third-degree burns.

Santiago said the tanker was not carrying oil when it was being repaired, but that oil residue in the tank may have caused the explosion and fire.

The 2,300-ton tanker would be towed to Navotas, a port town adjacent to Manila, he said.

Maritime authorities are checking if the ship secured the required permit from the Philippine Ports Authority before welding work was done, he said.

## Two activists slain in Isabela

**MANILA, Philippines (AP)**—Two left-wing activists were shot dead in northern Philippines, police said Thursday, in an attack the activists' colleagues blamed on the military's attempts to muzzle anti-government groups. The military denied involvement.

Elena Mendiola, 54, and her husband Ricardo Balauag, 51—both members of the small opposition political party Bayan Muna—were about to

leave Garit Village in northern Isabela province late Wednesday when two masked men on a motorcycle sprayed them with bullets, police said.

Police Senior Inspector Dionisio Saet said Mendiola, the party's regional secretary general, was found with six bullet wounds in different parts of her body, while Balauag had two.

Mendiola, a well-known anti-government figure in

the province, survived an ambush attempt in March by running for cover from unidentified assailants who shot her three times in front of her house, police and her colleagues said.

Bayan Muna national secretary general Robert de Castro said Mendiola and Balauag's deaths brought the number of the party's members killed this year to 13.

Since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo took office in 2001, 561 activists from various left-wing groups—including 91 from Bayan Muna—have been slain, de Castro said.



### 2nd Ambassadors/Consuls General Tour of the Philippines July 15-18, 2006

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**Deadline for Registration is on May 15, 2006. A non-refundable deposit of US \$100.00/Person, payable to Century Travel Agency Inc. due upon registration.**

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Additional costs will apply for these tours.

For more information, please contact:

#### Philippine Consulate General

5th Floor, Nauru Building  
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E-mail: saipanpcg@pticom.com

#### Or Century Travel Agency Inc.

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e-mail: arlene\_almero@centurytravelagency.com

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# PINOYSTYLE

## Rivermaya wins MTV Asia award

By **MARINEL R. CRUZ**  
INQUIRER

Rivermaya, which popularized songs like “Umuulan, Umaaraw,” “Liwanag sa Dilim” and “Awit ng Kabataan,” made history on Saturday at the 2006 MTV Asia Awards in Bangkok, becoming the first Filipino rock group to play in the award show’s history.

The four-member band, known locally as “Ang Banda ng Bayan,” has won MTV Asia’s Favorite Artist-Philippines award two straight years now. The winner gets the honor of representing the country at the MTV Asia Awards show.

Rivermaya is also the first Filipino music group to be given a performance slot in the show’s five-year history. Regine Velasquez (MTV Philippines Favorite Artist awardee of 2002) shared the spotlight with American singer Mandy Moore in that year when they did a duet of “Cry” at the awards show in Singapore.

Backed up by the string section of the Royal Thai Army Orchestra, Rivermaya’s front man Rico Blanco, Mark Escueta (drums), Mike Elgar (guitar) and Japs Sergio (bass) performed “You’ll Be Safe Here.”

Rivermaya was introduced by Kelly Rowland, awards show host and former member of the Grammy-winning trio Destiny’s Child.

According to band manager Lizza Nakpil, Rivermaya’s performance had an “overwhelming response and was singled out for praise” from a lineup that included Korn, Hoobastank, Daniel Powter and Rowland.

MTV Japan’s managing director Peter Bulland described Rivermaya’s performance as “world-class at the level of performances on any stage in

the United States or Europe.”

In its acceptance speech, Rivermaya dedicated its trophy to “all the bands and fans who have all worked so hard together to make 2006 another great year for Filipino music.”

### One for Philippines

“This one is for the Philippines,” Blanco said in an MTV interview before he went on stage to perform with his group.

Rivermaya also holds the distinction of being the only group to win the Favorite Group award from MTV Philippines for three years—2002, 2003 and 2005.

The group arrived in Bangkok on May 3 and will return to the Philippines on May 9.

The MTV Asia Awards took place at the 5,000-capacity theater of the Siam Paragon in Bangkok.

“The audience was composed of music industry professionals, media, record label representatives as well as fans from across the region,” said Nakpil.

On Sunday night, Rivermaya performed in an exclusive club at the RCA entertainment strip in Bangkok, the band manager said.

### Special award

“They have been offered additional play dates due to the overwhelming demand for tickets,” she told the Inquirer.

R&B superstars Destiny’s Child, which recently disbanded after a string of chart-topping hits, won a special achievement award for its contribution to international pop music.

Rowland, who accepted the award on Saturday night on behalf of the group, then thrilled about 4,600 fans with the first-ever live performance of her upcoming debut solo single, “Gotsta Go.”



**The four-member band Rivermaya has won MTV Asia’s Favorite Artist-Philippines award two straight years now. The winner gets the honor of representing the country at the MTV Asia Awards show.**

Rowland and her ex-bandmates, Beyonce Knowles and Michelle Williams, disbanded last year to pursue solo careers, but their MTV Asia Special Achievement in Music award was warranted for “their contribution to the music world and their immeasurable impact on pop culture,” MTV Asia said in a statement on its website.

Canadian singer-songwriter Powter was among an array of Western and Asian stars who took the stage in Bangkok. Powter showed off his piano skills with a tender rendition of his worldwide smash ballad “Bad Day,” which spent five weeks at No. 1 in the United States earlier this year.

“East meets West” was the theme for some performances. Thai hip-hopppers Thaitanium jammed with

British pop heartthrob Simon Webbe, who won an award for Favorite Breakthrough Artist, to showcase his new single “No Worries.”

### ‘Twisted Transistor’

American rockers Korn, who kicked off the awards ceremony with a scorching performance of their hit “Twisted Transistor,” took the trophy for Favorite Video for that song.

Other winners, determined by MTV viewers in Asia who voted through the Internet and cell phone text messages, included Green Day for Favorite Rock Act, Ricky Martin for Favorite Male and Kelly Clarkson for Favorite Female.

Vicki Zhao was named Favorite Artist for China, while Twins was deemed Hong Kong’s most popular act.

## Fisherman’s son is new Pinoy Pop Superstar

By **NINI VALERA**  
INQUIRER

The son of a fisherman from Navotas was declared the “Pinoy Pop Superstar” in the second year of the reality talent search contest of GMA 7.

Gerald Santos, 15, bested six other grand contenders in a series of show-downs before a live audience of about 5,000 people at the Araneta Coliseum on Saturday, where the competition was taped for telecast over GMA 7 on Sunday.

The third year high school student of Tangos Elementary School in Navotas won P1 million, a two-bedroom house and lot from Filinvest, a Chevrolet Optra, P300,000 worth of services from Vicki Belo, free beauty services for a year and P50,000 from Ricky Reyes, and P100,000 worth of clothes from Edwin Tan and Pepsi Herrera. He also won a record deal with GMA Records and a one-year management build-up contract with the network.

Gerald is the youngest contestant in the talent show, which included two finalists—Rosemarie Tan of Los Angeles, California, and Elise Estrada of Vancouver—from a parallel search in the US and Canada.

A undefeated champion for four weeks, Gerald, who was also named Viewers’ Favorite after he brought in more than 300,000 text votes, bested six other grand contenders, including Aicelle Santos, another crowd favorite and the first and only eight-week undefeated champion of the show.

Backstage, Gerald told the press that he would use his prize money to buy more clothes, a luxury that his parents, Danilo and Marian could not afford.

“I’ve used all of my clothes during the road tour of the show,” Gerald explained in Filipino.

### He’s keeping the car

He said the money was also a windfall for his parents, who are struggling to raise four children on a survival income.

Gerald said he would hang on to the car although he could sell it to buy a cheaper one.

“OK lang,” he shrugged, when told that gasoline prices had risen to an all-time high.

The new “superstar” also downplayed Rosemarie’s apparent protest over the results of the competition.

Rosemarie, 18, who represented the US in the search, had walked out of the show reportedly upon the instigation of her father, after she failed to make it as one of the top four. She did not participate in the production number of “Magsimula Ka” by the grand contenders, held before the announcement of the final face-off between Gerald and Aicelle.

### Battle of the Santos

Dubbed as the ultimate battle of the Santos, the face-off had Gerald and Aicelle sing Danny Tan’s original composition “Close To Where You Are.” A break in the voice of Aicelle during her performance apparently cost her the crown, even if she had been a heavy favorite by the show’s followers.

## Zsazsa: Dolphy II?

By **BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.**  
INQUIRER

It hasn’t been lost on concert-goers: Zsazsa Padilla has a flair for comedy.

Onstage, Zsazsa debunks her sultry chanteuse image with wacky one-liners and quick quips.

And then she won Best Actress in the last Metro Manila Film Festival for her comedic turn in “Ako Legal Wife: Mano Po 4.”

Is she the next Dolphy? Is she following in the footsteps of the country’s Comedy King, who also happens to be her life partner?

“No,” she protests when Inquirer

Entertainment brings up the prospect. “I can’t imagine... I can’t absorb the idea!”

She admits, however, that 17 years of togetherness invariably ends in osmosis.

“I’ve definitely imbibed his humor,” she says.

Dolphy himself thinks Zsazsa is a blast.

“When we watched ‘Ako Legal Wife,’ he told me I was funny,” she recalls. “Before that premiere night, I kept asking him: ‘What if the people don’t laugh?’ I held his hand throughout the screening. He was so cool. He said, ‘Don’t worry.’”

She believes they complement one another. “He’s very laid-back. I’m the worrier. If someone in the family coughs, I’m already thinking: Could it be cancer? Should we go to the hospital?”

The topic of weddings makes Zsazsa turn serious.

“Even though people keep asking [Dolphy and I when we’re getting married], I don’t want to feel pressured,” she says. “We don’t have plans. We believe there was a reason that it didn’t push through the last time.”

Zsazsa and Dolphy almost tied the knot three years go.

“Right after I got my annulment [from dentist Modesto Tatlonghari], Dolphy and I underwent personal turmoil,” she recalls. “I cannot blurt out the reasons; I hope people leave [that part] to us.”

What’s more important to her at this point, Zsazsa says, is their relationship.

On the work front, the budding comedienne returns to drama. “I play Rosamia, the Crying Diva,” she says, on the new ABS-CBN soap opera “Bituing

Walang Ningning,” which was based on Nerissa Cabral’s komiks novel.

Zsazsa was tapped to play Lavinia in the 1980s movie version starring Sharon Cuneta. “I couldn’t have done that,” she muses. “I don’t have the powers of Cherie Gil.”

Speaking of powers, Carlo Vergara’s Zsazsa Zaturannah was another comic-book character offered to the singer-actress.

“I first heard about that when it was Kris Aquino’s project,” Zsazsa says. Since Kris wasn’t available, “it was offered to Rufa Mae Quinto and then to me. Now I heard it’s back to Rufa Mae.”

When Regal Films producer Lily Monteverde offered the role to her, Zsazsa primed herself, physically and psychologically, to play the gay superheroine. “I worked out. Circuit training. I wanted to prove I could do the stunts, harness and action scenes.”



A love like no other

By ANA PATRICIA BARBACENA-SAWIT  
INQUIRER

The long lazy summer afternoon beckoned me to start cleaning my cabinet and empty the drawers in my bureau. I guess it was timely that I found a yellow-eared envelope containing what I think is the most precious letter I have ever kept.

I would like to share it with you as a tribute to my mother who, in her life, was the word “love” personified. Although it was never sent (thank God!), the letter is a clear indication of how far a mother would go to give her children the best things in life.

April 3, 1993  
Dear Editor:  
“It was probably Divine Providence that led me to read your April 1 column today, Saturday, about that mother who wished to sell her kidney. It is one bright idea I have been looking for but which has evaded me this past few months.  
“Editor, I too want to sell one of my kidneys. If only I can function with one lung, I can sell it, too. I find this as the one final solution that can end my woes. I thought it would help bail me out of the rut I am in. At least this is better than selling my soul to Satan—my heart and my conscience say so.

“My husband lost his job at the US Embassy when the Americans left Clark Air Base last year. And since he is already 50 years old, he finds it terribly hard to find another job.

“I am sending my five children (ages ranging from 6 to 19) to school this June. This means that I have to raise about P30,000-P40,000 for the partial payment. (Three of them at St. Scholastica’s College, the youngest at St. Paul’s and the eldest at UST).

“But that is not all. I also need a little something which I can use as equity for a motor vehicle loan I am taking from our Provident Fund to purchase an AUV to be used as a school bus. This calls for another P50,000. Do you think one of my kidneys can be sold for P80,000?

“I am a healthy person. I don’t drink or smoke. I have no heart ailment. Except for an appendectomy, I have never been hospitalized for any ailment minor or major. I shall be very willing to undergo preliminary physical examinations even at my expense if only to be able to present evidence of my fitness.

“I know you must be saying by now, ‘Life has really gotten that bad with this family.’ I say ‘Amen.’”

I will never forget the way my mom looked at me when she showed me the letter. She was asking for my opinion whether she should send it. Her voice sounded brave and determined, like a soldier gearing up for battle. But her eyes were saying a different thing. They were almost pleading that I say no, and for a moment, my mom looked like a helpless child. I had never seen my mother look at me like that.

By God’s grace, we were all able to enroll in school that year without her sending the letter (and without her selling her soul to Satan!). My sisters Carmela and Regina were able to graduate from high school and then go to college. She never thought of having us transferred to other schools because she believed we were at the best. I don’t know how she did it. With hard work and fervent prayers to all the saints in heaven, perhaps. And the continued support of her friends at work who were always there for her.

My dad passed away July 23, 1996, due to complications from a heart disease. The pain of losing him and the plethora of regrets is another story in itself. Something that would merit a different letter and tribute to a man whose faith in the Lord never waned up to the end.

After being diagnosed with leukemia on Jan. 2, 1998, my mother passed away, too, exactly one year to the day she was diagnosed. My sisters and I were devastated. It was like someone had taken the wind out of our sail. But we couldn’t grieve. We had to be strong for each other.

Being the eldest (I was 26 then and had a family of my own) I was left to care for my sisters, the youngest at 12 years old.

We are not financially well off. But through our joint efforts, the strong support of our husbands, and the occasional help from some relatives and friends, we have managed to send the two

younger ones to school, the youngest sister now a third-year college student at UST.

Today, we continue to look out for each other. We are each other’s confidantes and critics. We rely on each other for strength especially in times when the world seems to be on our shoulders. Each time we feel down, we remember how strong our mom was and how she bravely fought off our problems in life. This gives us a respite, our mom’s wisdom a comfort to our solitude.

To all those who still have their mothers around, please give them a hug and tell them that you love them. Life is so short and mysterious you’ll never know if this day would be your last. And death is always too quick and sudden. No matter how much you think a

Mother’s Day is tomorrow and the best gift you can give your moms is to let them know how much you love them and appreciate the things they do. As a mother myself, my heart flutters every time my sons kiss me and give me hugs. My heart sings when they text me that they miss and love me.

lingering illness, a well-researched disease or some expert advice might have prepared you for death, when it happens to someone you love you are always caught unaware.

Mother’s Day is tomorrow, and the best gift you can give your moms is to let them know how much you love them and appreciate the things they do. As a mother myself, my heart flutters every time my sons kiss me and give me hugs. My heart sings when they text me that they miss and love me.

To my mom, I say, “Thank you, you have showed us what love is all about. Please continue to guide us as we journey in this life. And, Mom, we miss you.”

The author is a library clerk in a small international school in Taguig.

A kiss to my mom, across the miles

By NIÑO MARK M. SABLAN  
INQUIRER

Unashamedly admit I am a Ma-ma’s boy. I have no qualms about showing my affections for her. We can have conversations about everything, even the touchiest topics. We can go out and have loads of fun doing absolutely nothing. I can hug her. Kiss her. Tell her I love her. Especially if she were here.

My Mom is in the United States, working on her papers so she can live there forever. She wants us to join her soon.

During my formative years, my mother was a huge presence, the way all mothers supposedly are. She’d help me with my assignments, dress me up for school, and introduce me to tons of books and toys. We shared so much happy times together that I’d bawl my eyeballs out whenever she had to leave for work.

And then I had a brother. And a sister.

Then all of a sudden, she packed her bags and went back to her parents’ house, taking with her our little sister, but leaving me and my brother behind with our dad.

Too young to understand the complexity of the whole situation, all I came to know was that my favorite girl on earth had transferred to a different planet.

Thankfully, weekends were spent

with her so all the fun moments were revived, albeit with a certain time limit. During weeknights, we’d call one another, update each other about what had happened that day and end the conversation with “goodbye, I love you.”

And then acne mushroomed all over my face. I reached puberty, got sucked

...distance shouldn’t be a hindrance to a relationship. Challenges like distance should just make the relationship stronger. And challenges should just make us exert more effort.

into school’s shallow society, and my favorite girl in the world got replaced by other girls and guys. School—and all its inhabitants, politics and drama—became my life. It became my focus. I was so into it that I almost forgot my mom. Blame it on school. Blame it on the little distance between us.

And then I received a bit of news that

made me want to stop school so I could be with her every day instead. She was going abroad for work. It was contractual, a couple of years or so, plus she’d get to visit us, too. There were a couple of good things that went along with it—packages, dollars, you know—but at the end of the day, I felt like it was a rotten idea.

For a little while there, I thought: How could she leave us just to earn some crisp green bills? It’s not as if she couldn’t get a job in the Philippines. So, yeah, there was some bit of anger and bitterness there.

So she hopped into a plane and zoomed somewhere.

The first few days were difficult, but one had to cope! I kept myself busy. Too busy, actually.

Before I knew it, she was back.

Before I knew it, she was leaving again. For another job. In another country.

Before I knew it, it had become her lifestyle, zooming in and out of our lives.

Always on my mind

So right now she’s stuck in the States and, thanks to high technology, I’m missing her less. But don’t get me wrong. I still miss her a lot.

When we discovered the joys of instant messaging and e-mail, we did it almost everyday. And then things came up so we ended up doing it less often. And then it turned to a weekly thingy.

And now we go online monthly.

It’s pretty ugly, come to think of it. But I guess we know we don’t need to go online everyday just to know we’re there for each other. Because we are here for one another, e-mail or no e-mail.

I have to admit there was a time when I was so busy living my life that I didn’t get to even think of her for some months. And the moment I realized that, it really hurt me. Now, I make sure she’s always on my mind, and that I let her know this.

Once in a while, I remember my mom and how much I miss her. Without warning, my chest gets crumpled inside and I break into tears. I have lost count but I know we’ve been far from one another for a very long time now. So I make sure I let her feel how much I love her—even only through forwarded, sappy e-mail or offline messages.

I love my mother much. I guess all children do. I love her for so many things.

For loving and accepting the weird child that I am.

For making me hungry for knowledge and creativity and learning.

For teaching me how to face the world, but letting me learn from my own mistakes at the same time.

There was a time when my mom was jobless. I was in college back then. Asking allowance from her was always a task, but she always managed to give

me some. She even helped out in her younger sister’s hair accessories business just to be able to give me money for school.

Every time I think of that, I melt. I feel jelly-like. I work so hard right now so that I can take care of her in the future. Give her what she gave me. Give her more than she wants, needs and expects. She gave me so much, I think it’s just fair for me to do the same.

Lessons

Being away from my mom has taught me loads of lessons.

It has taught me to always have a good relationship with my mother. Fights may be there, yeah, but I have also learned not to let the sun go down without us patching things up. We shouldn’t hurt the ones we love, after all.

I have also been reminded that life is too short and that there should be no room for regrets. This is why I always let my mother know how much I value her. I don’t want to regret not being able to say certain stuff to her. I don’t want things to be too late. I don’t want to regret my actions or inaction.

I have also learned that distance shouldn’t be a hindrance to a relationship. Challenges like distance should just make the relationship stronger. And challenges should just make us exert more effort.

So, if you’ll excuse me now, I still have some mother-and-son relationship to work on.



# SAMU'T SARI



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**NEW UPAA OFFICERS**  
The newly elected members of the University of the Philippines-CNMI Chapter take their oath of office Saturday at the OWWA center of the Nauru Building in Susupe. Administering the oath was Philippine Consul Belinda Ante.



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**UP ALUMNI ALL**  
From left, Oscar Yema, Doll Loste, Eli Arago, and Janet Villagomez pose during a recent reunion of the UP Alumni Association at Nauru Building.



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**IN RECOGNITION**  
Luen Thai corporate finance vice president and Concorde Garment Manufacturing Corp. general manager Eli Arago, center, is given a certificate of recognition by the Philippine government for his donation to the build-a-classroom project through the University of the Philippines Alumni Association-CNMI Chapter. With him are, from left, UPAA past president Fe Calixterio, Philippine Consul Belinda M. Ante, and UPAA advisor Lupe Sabino, and UPAA past president Janet Villagomez.



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**UFO MEETING**  
United Filipino Organization officers hold a meeting Saturday at Nauru Building.



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**AUTOMOTIVE CLASS**  
Members of the automotive class offered by the Philippine Labor Office pose for a photo Saturday.



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**BREAK TIME**  
Automotive class students at Nauru Building smile during a break.



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**GIRL POWER**  
Ladies of the UPAA-CNMI strike a pose during a recent meeting.